

Disability Services General Information

The Steps to Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Nancy Hartenhoff-Crooks is SDSU's coordinator of disability services working with all SDSU students who self-identify as having a disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendment Act of 2008.

Below are the processes and procedures that you will most likely encounter as you work with SDSU students with disabilities.

Once a student has self-identified as having a disability and provided documentation to the Office of Disability Services, the coordinator reviews the student's documentation and discuss with them accommodations that are reasonable and will be the most effective.

The coordinator then produces a digital accommodation memo for each class in which the student needs accommodations. The memo contains basic information about the student – their name, student id number, and the accommodations they are to have access to. The accommodation memo is emailed to the professor and the student is copied in the message. Professors are asked to send the coordinator a brief email acknowledging receipt of the memo. Professors are expected to provide the accommodations unless doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of their class. They are invited to contact the coordinator to discuss any concerns they may have.

The memo does not disclose the nature of the student's disability. That information is private and covered under FERPA – the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. FERPA says that information about disability should only be shared on a need-to-know basis and seldom is there a need-to-know.

Accommodations you will commonly see include:

Accommodations for testing including extended time – time-and-a-half is standard, however, there may be times when the student's disability is such that double-time is reasonable. Please note that I make a distinction between quizzes and exams so if the student's memo does not state extended time for quizzes only exams, quizzes are not included; a quieter setting (if the exam is given in a physical place, not online); a reader which is provided by our Testing Center, and occasionally a scribe.

Professors are encouraged to utilize the Testing Center for their campus face-to-face exams when testing outside of the classroom is reasonable. The professor is responsible for delivering and retrieving exams proctored there. Please note the Testing Center has professional staff and all testing rooms have cameras that are constantly monitored. The Testing Center utilizes software called RegisterBlast where students register for their exams. The software also has a feature which enables a professor to create an account and submit their exams through the portal. More information about registering for exams and RegisterBlast can be found under the Resources link on the Disability Services main page.

For classes such as science labs, the student and the professor will work out a plan so the student can have access to the extension of time they need.

Timing of Accommodated Exams

The coordinator tells students professors expect them to test at the same time or as close to the same time as their peers for test security reasons. However, there are two times when that may not be possible, and the student will need to communicate with his or her professor to work out a solution. The two times are: One - when the rest of the class is testing very early in the morning or late in the day, something that is typically done for large and multiple section classes. The Testing Center does not open until 8 a.m. And two – if the student has classes back to back and accessing extended time for the exam would mean they would miss part of or all of their next class. That is not reasonable or acceptable per university policy.

Accommodated Testing Reminders

As stated previously, it is the student's responsibility to register for his or her exam through the Testing Center via RegisterBlast. In addition, some professors require students utilizing accommodated testing at the Testing Center to remind them so they will know to send a copy of the exam there. However, not all professors have that expectation. That is why it is important to inform students when you receive their accommodation memo, if you do.

Recording of Lectures

Another accommodation you may see is a statement that the student may record lectures and will destroy recordings at the end of the semester. The memo references SDSU policy number 2:16 regarding recording classroom lectures.

Note takers

For students with sensory disabilities of either hearing or vision loss, and significant mobility disabilities that impact their fine motor skills, the Office of Disability Services will hire student note takers either a student who is also enrolled in the class or one who is not. If the note taker is not enrolled in the class, the professor is notified of the student's name and they may be asked to provide them with access to the class's D2L site.

Attendance and Related Issues

Another accommodation you may see is titled "Attendance and Related Issues". There are accompanying documents that go into great detail about the considerations and responsibilities associated with the accommodation. You may wonder why so much verbiage? Perhaps it is a bit of overkill but the language that had been used was proving insufficient.

Digital Textbooks

Many of our students are diagnosed with significant print disabilities, including learning disabilities, vision loss, and limited fine motor skills. The Office of Disability Services coordinates with the student to provide the accommodation of digital textbooks, which you may not know the student has unless the Office of Disability Services contacts you prior to the beginning of the semester to ask what text or texts you are using because you have not submitted your book order to the University Bookstore.

Sign Language Interpreters and Effective Communication in the Classroom

It is possible you may be notified that you will have a sign language interpreter in your class to facilitate communication for a student with hearing loss. When you are notified, the Office of Disability Services will share a document with some basic tips for working with sign language interpreters in case it will be a new experience for you.

Additional items to note about effective communication in the classroom – it is imperative that you utilize the sound system provided in the classroom. Some students with hearing loss need nothing more than the professor to utilize the classroom's sound system. Clear, effective communication can benefit other students such as students who struggle with attention and those for whom English is not their first language. If you find the classroom sound system is not working, please contact Classroom Technology Services for assistance. On occasion, you may be asked to carry part of an assistive listening system for a student with hearing loss in your classroom. Such devices work by the student wearing a receiver and the professor wearing the transmitter, basically a microphone that transmits directly to the student's hearing aids. If there will be a student in the classroom with such a system, every effort will be made to notify you ahead of time.

Course Syllabi Statements

Per University Policy, all course syllabi must contain the Board of Regent's ADA statement. The statement was updated in the spring of 2020 so please confirm that you are using the up-to date version. A link to that statement can be found on the Office of Disability Services' website.

In addition, if you use clickers in your class – Please include the language found in the same policy under item c. Optional Course Syllabi Components Roman Numeral iv. Use of Clickers.

If you have any questions about processes or procedures, or a specific student situation, please do not hesitate to contact the coordinator at 605.688.4504 or email at Nancy.Crooks@sdstate.edu.

